

City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 9, 2003

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: CITY COUNCIL CONSIDERATION OF THE FY 2002 ANNUAL REPORT
FROM THE ALEXANDRIA PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

ISSUE: City Council consideration of the FY 2002 Annual Report from the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission (Attachment).

RECOMMENDATIONS: That City Council receive the Annual Report from the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission and thank the Commission for its efforts on behalf of the City.

DISCUSSION: The Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission is an eleven-member advisory body created by City Council in March 1970 to study issues relating to park and recreation needs. City Council appoints nine citizens to the Commission from the three planning districts and two high school age members to represent the youth of the City.

The Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission has prepared a report that highlights the principal activities of the Commission during FY 2002 (July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002) and the Commission's planned future efforts.

ATTACHMENT: FY 2002 Annual Report for the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission.

STAFF:

Sandra Whitmore, Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities
Janet Barnett, Deputy Director, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

ALEXANDRIA PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT
JULY 1, 2001 - JUNE 30, 2002

Introduction

The Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission is an eleven-member advisory unit that was established by City Council in March 1970. City Council appoints nine citizens to the Commission from each of the three planning districts. Two high school age members are also appointed by City Council to represent the youth of the City.

The purpose of the Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission is to allow City residents to participate in planning activities, serve as a panel to hear citizen suggestions or concerns relating to recreation and park programs, advise City Council on community recreation needs, and assist the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities in its continuing effort to be aware of and sensitive to public needs, and to adjust its programming to meet the changing needs of its diverse participants.

Fiscal Year 2002 Planning District Representatives:

Planning District I	-	Judy Guse-Noritake, Chair
Planning District I	-	Henry Brooks
Planning District I	-	William Conkey
Planning District II	-	Kirk Fedder
Planning District II	-	Lynette Robinson-Hart (resigned 9/01)
Planning District II	-	Paige McThensa (appointed 11/01)
Planning District II	-	Bruce Dwyer
Planning District III	-	Kenneth Foran
Planning District III	-	Ellen Murray
Planning District III	-	Joanne Tomasello (resigned 9/01)
Planning District III	-	Fabian Robitalle, Jr. (appointed 10/01)
Youth Representative	-	Alex Rubenstein (resigned 9/01)
Youth Representative	-	Kimberly Dawkins (appointed 11/01)
Youth Representative	-	Todd Knisley

City Staff

Sandra Whitmore, Director - Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities
Janet Barnett, Deputy Director - Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities
Kirk Kincannon, Deputy Director - Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

1. PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission encouraged public participation in the decision making process involving recreational issues by holding public hearings on the following dates:

- October 17, 2001 to solicit input from citizens from Planning District III;
- November 15, 2001 to solicit input from citizens from Planning District II;
- January 17, 2002 to solicit input from citizens from Planning District I;
- October 17, 2001 at the William Ramsay Recreation Center to review the plans for the renovation of the "Buddie" Ford Nature Center; and
- February 21, 2002 at the Lee Center to discuss plans for a proposed Skate Park at Luckett Field on Duke Street.

2. ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The Commission continued to work with staff, the Waterfront Committee, and the public on the planning and design process for Windmill Hill Park;
- The Commission reviewed modifications to the design plans for the Rocky Versace Memorial, a monument that was created to honor Alexandria's Vietnam Veterans, and monitored construction of the Memorial when it began during FY 2002;
- The Commission continued its efforts to evaluate guidelines concerning the City's dog exercise areas and fenced dog parks, balancing the rights and responsibilities of dog owners and non-owners;
- The Commission continued to work with staff and citizens to address the City's needs for open space and to develop an Open Space Study. This study included input from the public and other interested parties, and reflected the need for additional open space in the City;
- The Commission worked with staff and consultants to develop a Needs Assessment relating to the Recreation Department's programs, services, and facilities. This Needs Assessment will include input from focus groups, School Board members, and other interested parties. The Open Space and Needs Assessment, when completed, will give the City and the Department a comprehensive plan for the future open space and recreation programs;

- The Commission supported the staff position not to close Ben Brenman Park Drive in Ben Brenman Park because traffic on this street is light and does not interfere with pedestrian safety. In addition, the Commission considered the fact that the closure of Ben Brenman Park Drive would result in the separation of the east and west sides of the park and the elimination of direct access to eastbound and westbound Duke Street from the park. The Commission also based its recommendation on the staff finding that the majority of the traffic using Brenman Park Drive travels to the park or places within the Cameron Station Development;
- The Commission continued to work with staff to develop and improve recreation programming for teens. These efforts included the continuation of successful programs such as Chinquapin Teen Nights, teen parties at T.C. Williams High School, teen programming and activities at the City's neighborhood recreation centers, and Youth Sports activities for teens. In addition, a teen dance party was held at the Mt. Vernon Recreation Center, a teen skating party was held at the Cora Kelly Recreation Center, a teen talent show was held at the Charles Barrett Recreation Center, and the Recreation Department also sponsored a "Halloween Splash" party for teens in middle school;
- The Commission and the Department formed a focus group to explore the need and demand for a skate park in the City of Alexandria at the request of City Council. The focus group consisted of staff from the Department, two members from the Park and Recreation Commission, and a number of young skaters and their parents.

The objective of the focus group was to determine the need, size, cost, and preferred location for a skate park in the city. Based on group findings and site characteristics, Luckett Field was recommended as the preferred site. As a result, the Department began working with an engineering and design firm to provide construction and bid documents for the project. Completion of the skate park is scheduled for Memorial Day, 2003;

- The Commission commented on the proposed Eisenhower Avenue Duke Street Connector, strongly recommending against all alternatives that would impact the use of parks at Cameron Station in any way; and
- The Commission's Bicycle Study Committee remained active throughout the year with monthly meetings and other activities. Committee members identify maintenance needs and safety improvements on the city's bike routes and the city installed curb cuts at several locations and improved bicycle accommodations on the redesigned Mill Road and repaved section of King Street. The committee assisted on the City's Annual Bike Round-up for disadvantaged youth and Bike to Work Day with over 200 participants at Market Square. The Committee led bike rides associated with city events on Earth Day, National Trails Day and Archaeological Month. The committee assisted on a successful Federal TEA21 award of \$668,000

to the city to improve the Eisenhower Valley Multi-use Trail, provided assistance to city staff on the VDOT Northern Virginia Bike Plan, and worked with the East Eisenhower planning team to design bicycle accommodations in the area. The committee maintains a website and list serve with 140 subscribers to keep the Alexandria bicycling community informed.

3. **FUTURE GOALS**

The Commission will continue to evaluate existing recreation programs and make recommendations to modify programs or add new programs to best serve the diverse needs of Alexandria residents from different age groups, demographic groups, and geographic areas. The Commission will closely monitor the progress on Windmill Hill Park and its affect on Alexandria residents. The Commission will also continue to monitor park and field maintenance and make recommendations to improve the maintenance of current recreation facilities. The Commission will also continue to make recommendations to improve the diversity in all recreation programs, and to continue to improve the City's teen programming efforts. In addition, the Commission will continue to work on issues pertaining to open space, dog parks, dog regulations, and other key issues as they arise.